

GENERAL CPS CASES

INVESTIGATION TIME FRAMES

CPSG.1. Did the investigating worker see the child within the priority period?

According to DCFS practice guideline section 202.4 “the priority response time shall be based upon the information received at Intake and determined prior to the face-to-face contact with a child. The priority determines the time allotted for the CPS worker to make face-to-face contact with the alleged victim regardless of age. In cases involving multiple alleged victims, the allegation driving the highest priority determines the overall priority response time for the referral. The alleged victim with the highest priority shall be seen within the priority response period. All alleged victims on the case need to be seen during the initial period of the investigative period. The purpose of the face-to-face contact is to assess immediate protection and safety needs for the child.” **It is preferable to make the contact with the primary victim but another victim involved in the allegation may count as meeting this priority period.** This contact may or may not include the investigative interview. It is acceptable for a worker to see a child within the priority periods and actually conduct an investigative interview later. The child must be seen within 60 minutes of the worker receiving notification of the referral for a priority one referral (three hours for rural areas where the child lives more than 40 miles away), within 24 hours for a priority two and by 11:59 pm of the third working day of the time of the initial referral for a priority three (not including weekends or holidays).

Check the record to see what priority was assigned. The most likely place to find the assigned priority would be at the top of the Child Abuse Neglect Report form (CANR) or on the SAFE general tab. Next, determine if the child was seen within the period for that assigned priority. The response time starts from the time the investigating worker received notification of the referral from intake, which should be recorded at the top of the CANR form or on the SAFE computer system as Start Date. The time the child was seen is usually documented on the general tab and in the Activity Log. These dates are compared to ensure consistency. If the dates are different, the date in the activity log will override the date on the general tab.

YES	The child was seen within the assigned response time.
NO	It is not documented that the child was seen within the assigned response time; or it is not possible to determine timeliness because the response priority is not indicated, the referral received time is not indicated, and/or the time the child was seen is not indicated in the record.
NA	The child died before the referral was made and it was not necessary to see the child within the priority time frame.

CPSG.2. If the child remained at home, did the worker initiate services within 30 days of the referral?

According to DCFS practice guideline section 204.14, “every child and family with protection or safety needs, or who are at continued risk shall be considered for ongoing services through DCFS or community partners. The decision for services shall be made as a result of the consultation between the CPS caseworker, the CPS supervisor or designee, the family (where possible), and the community service provider as needed. The discussion will include the threats of harm, the child’s vulnerabilities, and the protective capacity of the caregiver.”

For the purpose of the CPR review, offering services is not required if the case is unsupported. Initiating services can include DCFS directly providing services as well as referring the family for services from other agencies/providers. Giving written or verbal information to the family about local resources constitutes a referral. These services are to be initiated within 30 days of the start date of the referral. (If the Regional Director has granted an investigation extension, services should be initiated within the extension period granted.) The worker can indicate services offered to the family on page three of the CANR form. Services offered, initiated, provided may be documented in the activity log or closure summary. Services may be listed on the details screen of the Safe computer system. Documentation of transfer to PSC, PFP, or PSS would be considered an indication of initiation/offer of services. Check the record to see if, in fact, there is any indication that the family actually needed any services. Check the Immediate Protection Safety Assessment form (SDM Safety Assessment), the CPS Risk Assessment (SDM Risk Assessment), Child and Family assessment or the Activity Log for such indications. Remember services need to be initiated if there is a protection or safety need or a continued risk to the child. If the child is removed from the home for a short period of time but is returned home prior to the end of the investigation, this question is still applicable and needs to be answered Yes, No, or Partial as appropriate. If the worker offers services to the family and the family refuses services, this question may be answered yes.

YES	Within 30 days of the referral (or within the extension period), the worker initiated/offered services for the family. The child/family were already receiving needed services at the time of the referral and no additional services are needed;
NO	There is an indication in the record that the family needed services, but there is no evidence that the worker initiated/offered services or no relevant services were available.
NA	The family moved out of state before 30 days; the child had been removed from the home AND remained out of the home; the report was unsupported or without merit; the worker was unable to locate the child and the other family members do not need services.

CPSG.3. Was the investigation completed within 30 days of CPS receiving the report from intake or within the extension period granted if the Regional Director granted an extension?

As per DCFS practice guideline section 204.15 “A CPS case shall be closed no later than 30 days from disposition of the case by Intake to CPS” and 204.8 “If the investigation cannot be completed within 30 days from the disposition of the case to CPS, the CPS caseworker shall make a request for an extension to the regional director prior to expiration of the initial 30-day period.”

The date the investigation was completed is recorded as the investigation end date on the CANR form. The completion date may also be found in the Activity Log or on the General tab of the SAFE computer system. For an investigation to be considered complete there must be an investigation end date listed on the CANR form (or on the General tab) along with a completed CPS Risk Assessment and the Immediate Protection Safety Assessment (SDM Safety and Risk Assessments) completed within the 30-day period. If the worker cannot complete the investigation within 30 days, he/she must request an extension from the Regional Director. The extension must be requested *before* the original 30-day time period expires. The Regional Director may grant a second extension for an additional 30 days if extenuating circumstances exist. The extension approval should be documented on the CANR form or by red asterisk marks on the General tab of the SAFE computer system. Also, a Missed Priority/30 Day Extension Form may be found in the file.

YES	The investigation was completed within 30 days, or the Regional Director granted an extension and the investigation was completed within the extension period.
NO	There is no documentation that the investigation was completed within 30 days or not completed within the extension time frame if an extension had been granted; timeliness could not be determined because the date intake received the report was missing and/or the date the investigation was completed was missing; or there is no closure date, IPSA and/or risk assessment (or SDM tools).

CONTENT OF THE INVESTIGATION

CPSG.4. Did the worker conduct an interview with the child outside the presence of the alleged perpetrator?

According to DCFS practice guideline section 203.1B, an “interview with the child must be conducted outside the presence of the alleged perpetrator”. Any child identified as an alleged victim in an allegation having the ability to communicate verbally or through other reliable means (sign language, writing, interpreter, etc) shall be interviewed. This means that all children need to be interviewed regardless of age if they are able to communicate. It can be assumed that a child under age two is usually unable to communicate well enough to describe abuse situations. A courtesy worker may conduct the interview if the CPS worker would have to travel an unreasonable distance to see the child.

Check the Activity Log for evidence that the interview was conducted and if it was conducted outside the presence of the alleged perpetrator. If the child is interviewed with one parent present when the other parent is the alleged perpetrator, and it later turns out the parent present at the interview is also a perpetrator, it should be recorded that the interview took place outside the presence of the perpetrator, since that was true at the time. However, if the parent/alleged perpetrator refuses to allow the investigator to interview the child outside his/her presence, the investigator must discuss the situation with the AG or supervisor in order to receive an EC answer. If child is interviewed with a person and it is unknown if the person is the perpetrator this question can still be answered YES.

YES	The child was interviewed and the alleged perpetrator was not present during the child’s interview.
NO	There is no evidence regarding the presence of the perpetrator during the interview or no interview was conducted/documented.
EC	The parent/alleged perpetrator refused to allow the child to be interviewed outside of his/her presence AND the investigator discussed the situation with the supervisor. The child refuses to be interviewed outside the presence of the alleged perpetrator.
NA	No interview was conducted/documented because the child is unable to communicate verbally or through other reliable means; law enforcement conducted interview and DCFS reviewed a copy of the report and no other information is needed.

CPSG.5. Did the worker interview the child's natural parents or other guardian when their whereabouts are known?

As per DCFS practice guideline section 203.1C-1&2 the child's natural parents or other guardian shall be interviewed regardless of residence, unless they are incarcerated for the entire investigation or their whereabouts are unknown. Each allegation shall be discussed.

Check the Activity Log, child and family assessment, case closure summary and other documentation in the record for evidence of an interview with both parent(s)/guardian about the allegations involving the child. **If only one parent is interviewed and the reason is documented as to why the other parent is not interviewed, then the question may be answered "yes."** If the allegation involves a child in foster care, the FC caseworker will need to be interviewed if the child's parents' rights have been terminated or the parents' whereabouts are unknown. However, if the child is in foster care and the parents are still involved with the child, then the child's parents need to be interviewed. If law enforcement interviews the parents and DCFS believes the interviews were satisfactory, the written report has been provided to DCFS and no additional information is needed, then the DCFS investigator does not need to re-interview the parents. If law enforcement interviews one parent and DCFS interviews the other parent, this question may be answered yes. If law enforcement interviews one parent and DCFS does not interview the other parent and no valid reason is given, this question should be answered no. If one parent is interviewed about the allegations and the caseworker makes at least two attempts either by phone, letter, or home visit to interview the other parent but is unsuccessful, this question can be answered yes.

YES	The worker interviewed the child's parent(s)/guardian. The worker interviewed one parent and law enforcement interviewed the other parent.
NO	The whereabouts of the natural parent(s)/guardian was known but there is no evidence that the worker interviewed the parent(s)/guardian. Law enforcement interviewed one parent and DCFS did not interview the other parent. No evidence the allegations were discussed with the parents.
NA	The child was abandoned (parents unknown); or the parents' whereabouts were unknown; or law enforcement interviewed both parents and the investigator did not need additional information as per the police report. One or both parents are incarcerated and are not released prior to the case closure.

CPSG.6. Did the worker interview third parties who have had direct contact with the child, where possible and appropriate?

DCFS practice guideline section 203.1D1&2 require personal interviews (in person or telephonically) with third parties or collateral contacts having had direct association with the child or who are otherwise knowledgeable about the case, unless it is inappropriate or impossible. **If a third party or collateral contact is identified as an eyewitness or has first-hand knowledge about the abuse/neglect a personal interview must be conducted (in person or telephonically).** Third parties may include school personnel, health care providers, day care providers, relatives, neighbors, and others who have had direct association with the child or are otherwise knowledgeable about the case and are believed to have information regarding the allegation or the safety of the child. The referent must be interviewed if he/she was an eyewitness of the allegations or has first hand knowledge of the reported abuse. If the investigator interviews the referent, the requirement for this question will be met. The support person present during the child's interview could be considered a third party if the support person was interviewed.

Look in the Activity Log and the Summary of Contacts form for an indication of third parties interviewed. You may also find information in the case closure summary. Look for interview transcripts or reports from doctors and other health care providers as well as school staff members. Siblings who are listed as victims for the same allegations as the PV cannot be considered third parties. Stepparents who are primary caretakers of the victims cannot be considered third parties. DCFS staff who are providing a direct service to the family and who have first hand knowledge about the services the family is receiving can be considered a third party. If law enforcement interviews the third parties, provides a written report to DCFS of the interviews and DCFS feels the interviews are satisfactory and no additional information is needed, the investigator does not need to re-interview the third parties.

YES	At least one third-party was interviewed about allegation or safety of the child.
NO	There was an indication of third parties, who had knowledge about the case and/or safety of the child but there is no evidence that a third party was interviewed.
NA	There were no third parties identified who had direct contact with the child and who had relevant information about the case and/or the safety of the child; or it is documented that the report should be supported on the word of the child and/or other available evidence, and no third party interviews are necessary; or that law enforcement requested no interviews with third parties because of on-going criminal investigations; or law enforcement interviewed the third parties and DCFS did not re-interview them because no additional information was needed based on the report from law enforcement. The referent is anonymous and there are no other third parties appropriate to interview.

CPSG.7. Did the CPS worker make an unscheduled home visit?

An unscheduled home visit is part of the investigation as per DCFS practice guideline section 203.2. “The CPS caseworker **shall complete unscheduled home visits in cases with allegations involving Domestic Violence, Child Endangerment (when there are concerns of drug use or drug activity in the home), Environmental Neglect, Non-Supervision, and Physical Neglect. Unscheduled home visits shall occur on cases involving other allegation types when the information gathered would indicate a need for an unscheduled visit to the home.**

Check the Activity Log for documentation of an unscheduled home visit. **You cannot assume a home visit was unscheduled if there is no indication in the record to make it clear.** The worker must specify that the home visit was unscheduled. The home visit should occur in the child’s home where the child normally lives and/or where the abuse occurred. If the child moves from the home and there is no intention to return the child to the home such as moved from the mother’s home to the father’s home or another relative’s home, the unscheduled home visit may occur in the home where the child is residing at the time of the investigation. Remember that the reason for the home visit is to ensure the home is safe for the child and can occur at any time during the investigation.

YES	The worker made an unscheduled home visit.
NO	There is no evidence that the worker made an unscheduled home visit.
EC	The worker documented two or more attempts to visit the home.
NA	The family is homeless and the family’s current address is unknown; the parents are in jail/hospital/rehab center for the entire 30 days and the child is placed elsewhere. An unscheduled home visit was not required because the allegations did not specifically involve circumstances of the home and/or concerns related to activities of persons living in the home.

INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

CPSG.8. Were the case findings of the report based on facts/information obtained/available during the investigation?

According to DCFS practice guideline 204.13B; “The CPS caseworker shall record details and sequential casework activities and information obtained on an open CPS investigation. A complete description of all casework activities and the rationale for conclusions made.” This means the case findings/results should be documented in the record (*e.g.*, the CANR form, activity logs or the general tab or the details tab of the Safe computer system). As per DCFS practice guideline section 204.10 the determination of acceptable findings shall be based on the facts of the case obtained at the time of the investigation. The presence of such documentation in the file, with a finding specified and explained, should provide evidence that a decision was made based on the facts in the case. There are six case finding results: supported, unsupported, without merit, unable to locate, unable to complete investigation and false report. **The case finding decision may be made based on the child’s statements alone; corroborating evidence shall not be required in all cases.** The decision to un-support may not be based on an inability to identify or locate the perpetrator or solely because the perpetrator was an out-of-home perpetrator when the evidence shows the abuse/neglect occurred. An allegation shall not be considered unsupported because the family corrected the conditions that caused the abuse/neglect while the investigation was pending. The CPS worker, in making case findings, shall consider the conclusions of the health care provider regarding non-accidental injury, sexual abuse, or medical neglect.

Review the Activity Log, the Detail Tab and/or the General Tab of the SAFE computer system, or the CANR form for documentation of the reason for the case findings decision, and to determine whether these rules were followed.

YES	<p>The decision was based on facts/information obtained/available during the investigation; that is clear documentation which specifies a finding and explanation for finding, and, if the finding was unsupported, all the following conditions were met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The unsupported decision was not based on an inability to identify or locate the perpetrator or solely because the perpetrator was an out-of-home perpetrator.▪ The unsupported decision was not based on improved conditions in the home.▪ If the unsupported decision was contrary to the child’s word, there is other evidence in the file supporting that decision.
NO	<p>There is no documentation in the case that the decision made in the case is based on facts/information obtained/available during the investigation. There were multiple allegations in the case, some of which had findings based on facts/information as explained above, and some of which did not.</p>